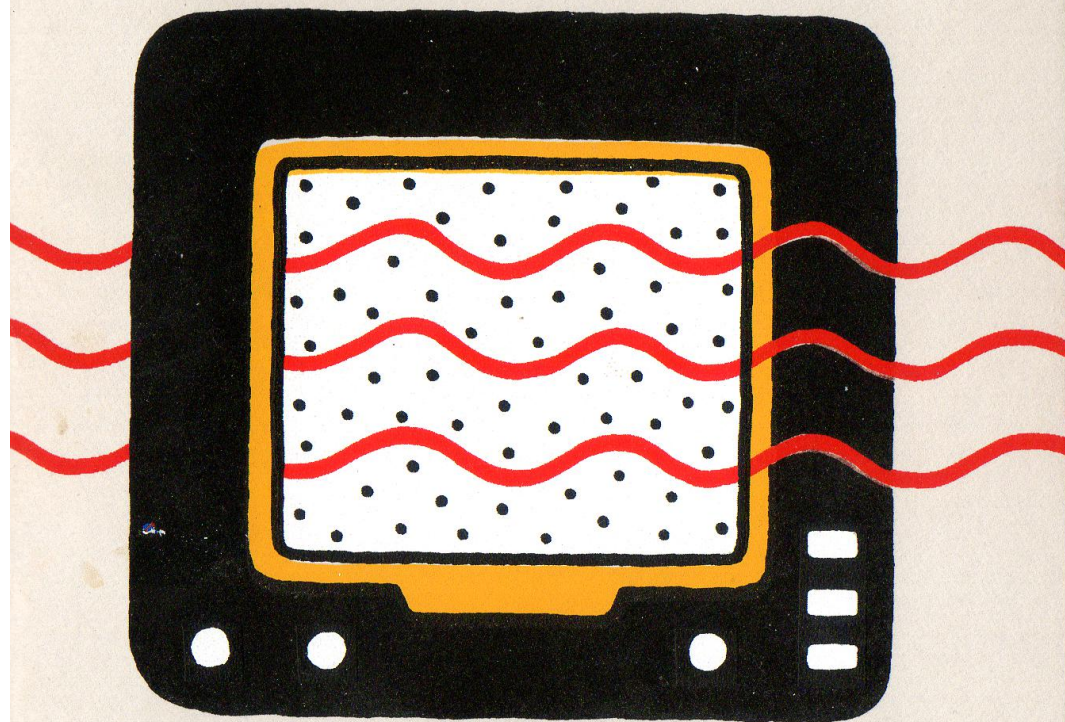


STONES • IN THE • LAKE



Poems by John M. Bennett
Drawings by David McLimans

STONES • IN THE • LAKE



For JWB, KGB, JPB, KC

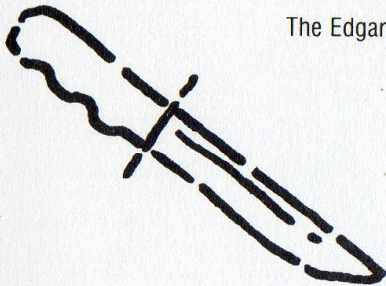
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The Edgar Allan Poe Messenger

Blades

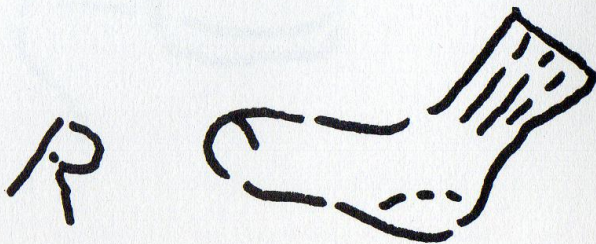
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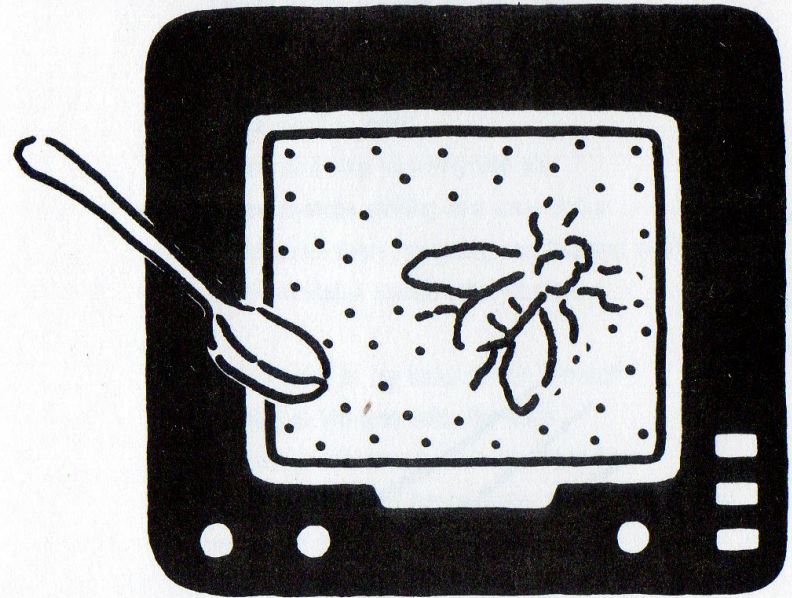
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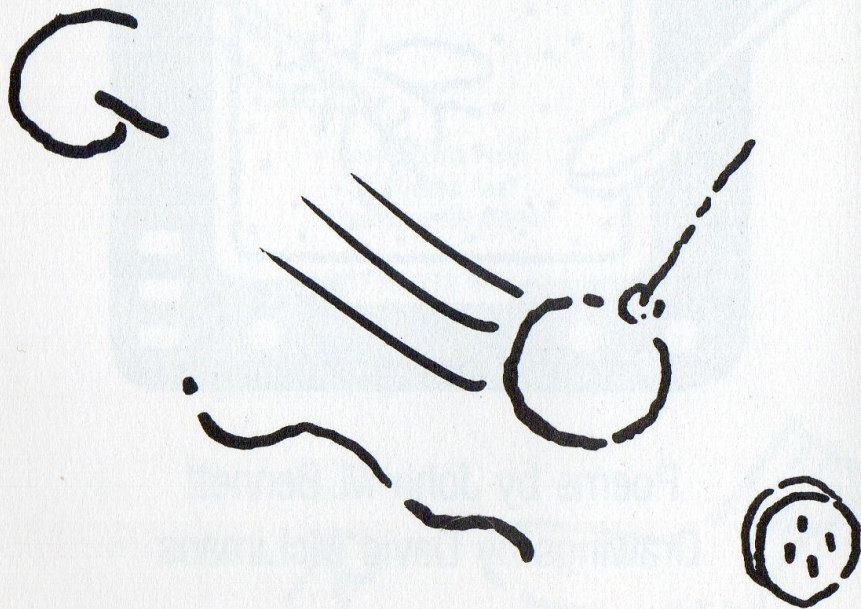
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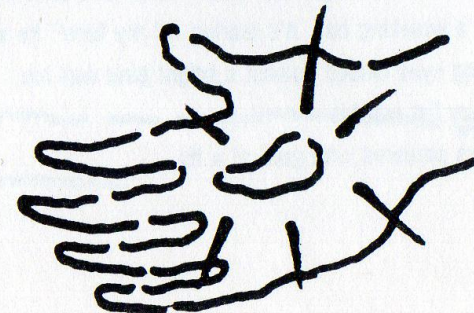


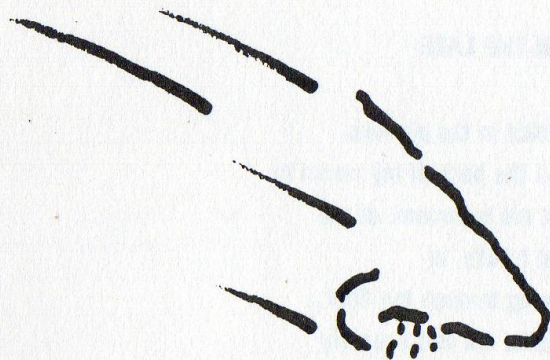
STONES IN THE LAKE

I was huddled in the blankets
air pressed the back of my neck I'm
thinking of the bathroom, of the
shiny toilet handle, of
water seeping through the floor;
my head jerks out and I see my
shoes slumped beside the bed

I was standing on the flat cold deck I was
staring at the nervous waves I was
gripping the slick steel rail and
locking my eyes on a passing island black
in the swelling mist;
I think of a ship plunging into air,
concrete steps sinking in a cave and a
stone down there, sweating and flashing with salt;
a pair of shoes stands empty before it

A dog tooth in my hand I'm on a beach
looking at the grey lake, the edge
quivering with smeary points of light I'm
sleeping, a seagull hangs limply above my hair my
ankles tilt in stone-rocked shoes





HIS NOSE

His nose is sailing through the rows of cars it's a
rock splitting the air which joins at the back of his
hat he slaps at a fly in his nostril it's
leading him through a hissing door it's
tilting his head at a bin of glistening meat
a numbness spreading in his cheeks

At the center of his thoughts an itching stone a
sodden anchor, it's not rising loose, he
dreams him noseless, floating above the
shopping center, cartops shine like backs of
fish humping and diving in the asphalt;
where his nose should be, a jewel of air

"It's a wrecking ball, it's tearing off my face" he was
leaning eyes closed against a bright pink wall his
grocery list wet his
fingers smeared with guts of a fly

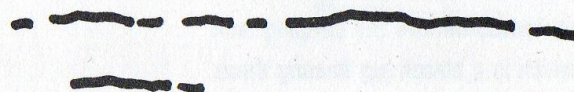
A VACATION

His pants on his head his
shirt knotted around his feet he
stands in the closet, groping at the
mildewed walls; through the
keyhole, a smear of yellow light

He'd been listening to the meter man he'd
been skulking behind the door, he'd
been counting "Gas Man" shouted slowly up the block he'd
been seeing a key sweating in the lock

He was sleeping in the bathroom
his head next the toilet
he dreamt of dripping
water trickling down the pipes
a lake beneath the floor with
3 stones through the flat dark surface a
pair of new white shoes waits at the edge
their laces stiff upright in the air

He's waking he's
lunging for the closet, "The Sock The
Sock" he gasps, tossing
mothballs and laundry over his head





I was standing in some woods rotten
 stumps with young twisted trees surfing up I
 blurred my eyes and felt the
 light fluttering in my head; I
 lie down in the weeds, see silverfish, spiderwebs,
 shells of seeds and dream me in a tower, high
 above a lake, a stormwindow hangs off the windowframe

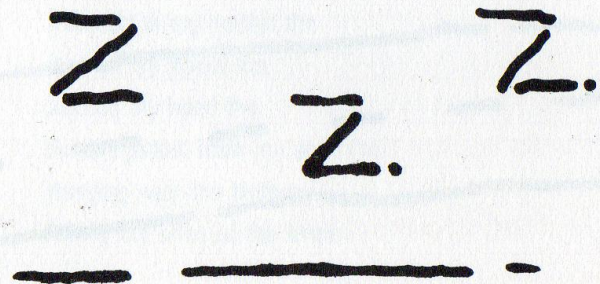
MOONHEAD

I squat at the lake's edge a
 pile of rocks between my feet I
 look out at the white circles drifting
 toward the center, think of wading out, my
 body gone in the swirling brown
 water lipping at my neck; the
 whiteness mirrors my sleeping face
 which is a bleach jug floating there

THE LAKE IN THE GROCERY STORE

He stumbles out of the rain sees
 soggy coupons wadded in a grocery cart,
 black stains rising up the sides of his shoes, he
 lurches down an aisle and stops, listens to the
 white buzz, "The Lake The Lake" he
 tries to see its grey pulsing body but the
 light's a wall the floor's a wall the
 catfood's a wall, it's pressing his water into a
 tiny dry box, his skin stiff at the edge

He's walking around the lake and he's
 hitting his foot on a rock and he's
 walking around the lake and he's
 glancing at the wide grey swell and he's
 walking around the lake and he's
 walking on top of the cliffs and he's
 stopping at a falling-off tree and he's
 walking around the lake and he's
 stepping toward the edge and he's
 holding his foot over cold wet air and he's
 walking around the lake

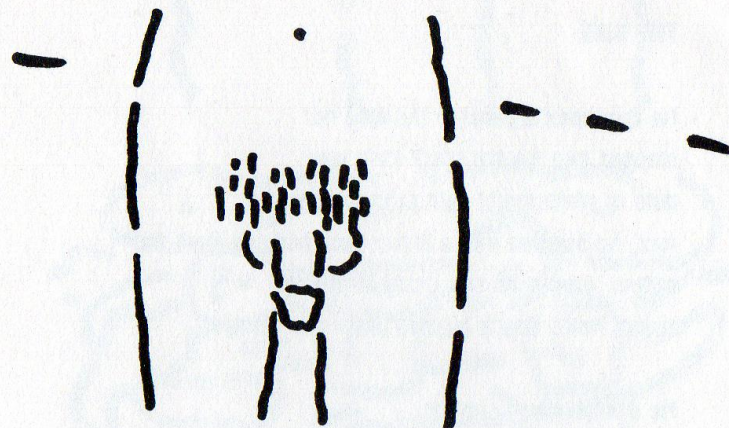
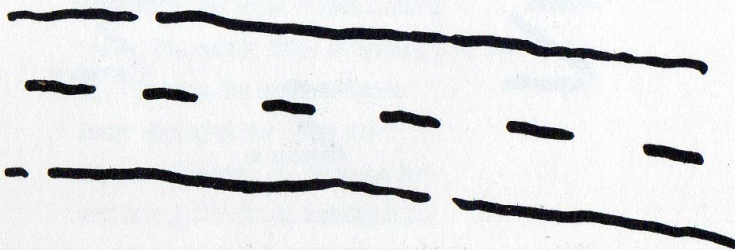


WAITING IN THE WATER

My feet jerk forward over the damp concrete I
see a row of men sleeping in chairs I
stand in front of them, blinking and swaying,
scanning the walls for a clock, a
thin grey man snores and bubbles near the hot air duct I'm
scratching my name on a tiny form I'm
leaning my head on the flat hard wall

Last night on the toilet I was picking my
nose and muttering about God, my
feet were itching, my ass not wiped I
wanted to yuk at the dogsoap bottle I
wanted to stand naked at the window I
wanted to see through the mirror I
wanted to be a child staring hard at boiling water

The door the sun on the steps the
cooling tower the
matches in my pocket the
bike at the curb the
red leaves blowing before it



WORM BOY

I was walking through the woods the
path went into a hot green room I saw
stiff fish on the bushes, silver
bowls floating in air I'm
trying to walk but my feet are
snarled in crickets, black and
pululating around my ankles
"What's the time?" I thought and saw a
hill of worms on the path behind me

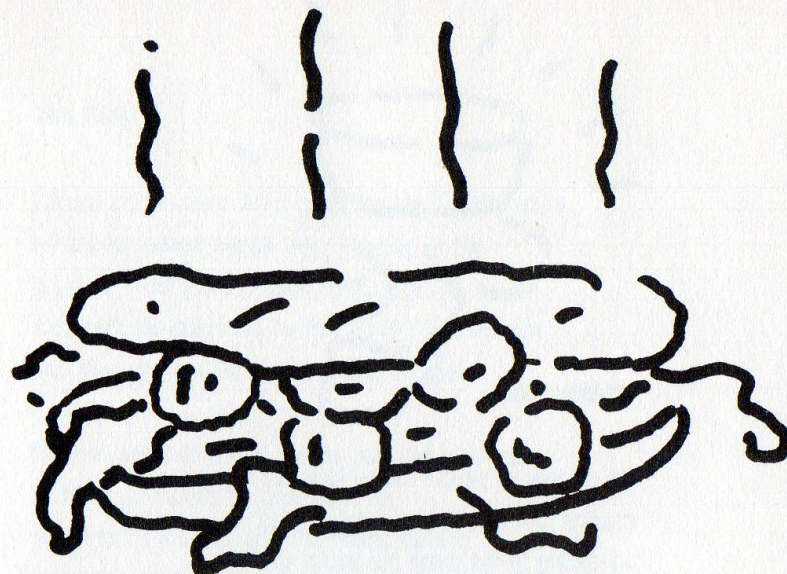
The mud in my pocket the
stink of my shoes the
cuts on my hand the
buttons jerked from my shirt I'm
standing near the highway
flailing my arms at the fence

THE BIKE

He tore open a panel in the attic he
stepped into the hot black cave saw
dots of white bright light swimming in the
roof, he bumped into a heavy sack hanging from the
rafters, groped its soft dusty lumps and
stops; hears wasps buzzing under the shingles

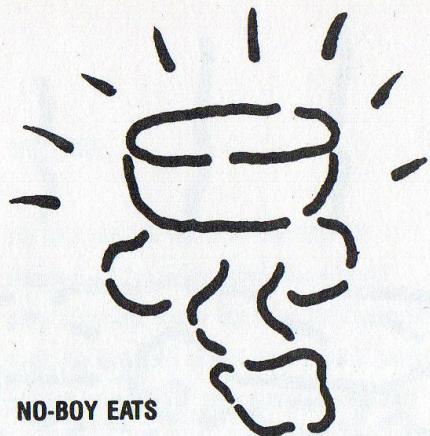
He slumps down panting,
remembers riding his bike as a boy,
burning above the wheels, a girl closing a
door, no business open as he
speeds along the long dark street, the
cold like a knife in his eyes

A manhole cover was missing in the alley he
stood beside the cool round hole, heard
hissing down there, thought of phones hung up,
radios with the speakers tore out; he was
dropping a key, waiting for the distant splash



HASH FACE

Central teeth speeding above blue balls on his
chin with tit pimple protrusions where the
eye should be, No-Boy's dressing to kill he's
got a pocket full of dead horse tongue depressors
shreds of steel wool sticking from his nose
"I've been cooling my head in the catbox I've been
painting meatball sandwiches Will I vomit 1000 times
before I die?" he stands in front of the door and's
sucking a deodorant stick, starting to cough, he thinks he
hears barking on the steps outside, grinds his lips on the
antchain climbing the wall and heads for the kitchen where he's
eating cotton wads and stuffing 'em up his nose DRY DRY he
whisps he's licking his final spit he's cramming a
dozen cheesespray cans in the microwave and plugging it in



NO-BOY EATS

He dreams of people falling in a lake he
dreams him sleeping on a beach and
squeezing to his chest his socks and
mirror shades; a shining bowl of
water sits on his penis with a fork in the
air above it, he feels the
knife and spoon on his tongue

There were bees whirling around the dumpster next the
Meat Receiving sign, he walks
beneath them, smells the bloodsoaked styrofoam and
dripping plastic wrap, a wad of
hair sticks from the crack of the
basement elevator dock; he
raises his hand, his fingers comb the bees

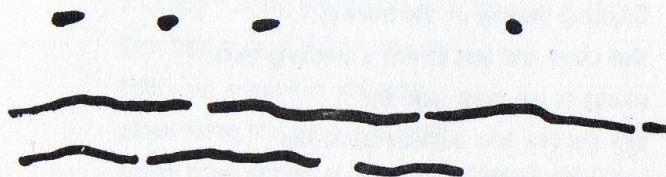
He walks through the restaurant door he's
dripping wet he hangs his sodden shoes on a hatrack and
asks for a plate of napkins; he
sits in a corner and grins at them, his
stomach bloating but not with steak
nor ice nor gravied taters

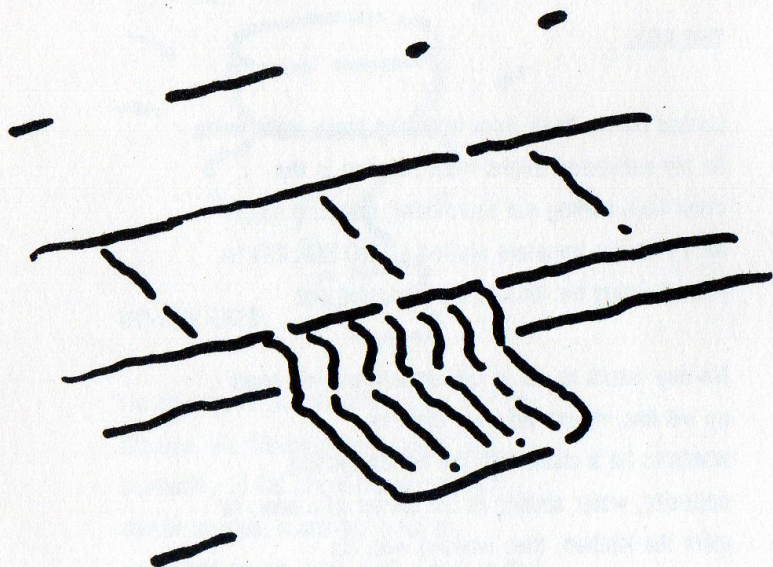
THE BOIL

Lumps on his head from bumping black walls welts
on his suckerrood thighs from dancing in the
dryer he's coffing out styrofoam, slapping his
ears with the transfers stuffed in; NO BOILING he
sez, plunging his fists in the steaming pot

No-Boy wants to roll in on himself, put his head
up his ass, mouth his own dick; he
wants to be a clock with the hands turning
opposite, water sinking in the center of a lake; he
exits the kitchen, tries walking with his
feet in his hat

He's standing by the garage, he thinks of
radio towers on the beach, of his
wife sliding her skin against his; his
feet are buried in leaves he
watches a slick blonde car whispering up the
drive a woman inside is exposing her
teeth and rubbing the white shiny wheel





A PICTURE OF SLEEP

I'm crawling into a low mud room where I
lie on my side, grey
lumps hang from the ceiling, I
reach up, feel them slick and soft,
changing from the touch of my hands
"This is a painting" I think

Crossing the city on the freeway I
was close and fast behind a smoking truck, I
swung to the outer lane and
saw the sky, low bulbous cloud like
waves congealed beneath my skull;
I sped past the truck, I was heading into fog

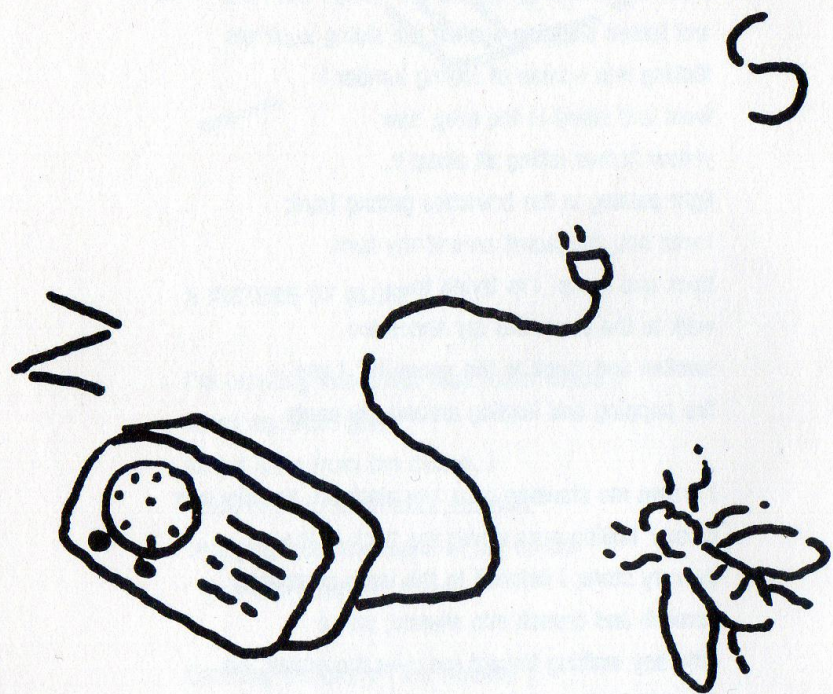
FALL IN THE ALLEY

I was scraping hamburger off the porch, I
was spitting on it, globs for eyes, a
footprint mouth; in a bag I
carried the reeking face to a sewer hole, there were
soggy Jesus books clotted in the gutter and I
thought of winter, whitening the northern side of town

From the dark mud behind the garage from the
wet leaves slapping against the siding squirrels
flicking into a heap of rotting lumber I
went and stood in the alley, saw
yellow flames falling all along it,
light pulsing in the branches getting bare;
I was hot, the jacket around my neck
thick and damp, I'm trying to
walk to the street but my shoes are
swollen and stuck to the gooey tar, I see
fire popping and leaping around my pants

I dream me standing on a low platform, the sky was
cloudy, boiling over slowly the back of the
grocery store; I listened to the trash compactor
screech and crunch into silence, saw a
little boy walking toward me over the gravel, his
face hidden by a yellow cap, he
holds out a hammer and saw,
stops some feet away and waits,
heavy black smoke pouring from beneath his hat





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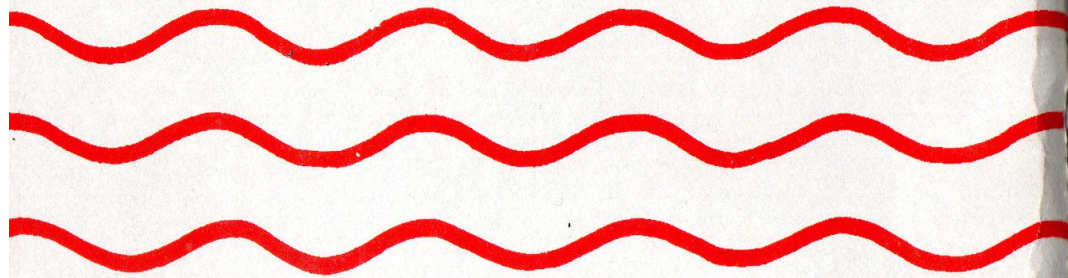
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